Did The Lives Of Former Slaves Improve After The Civil War?

Supporting Questions

1. What were the conditions of slavery before the Civil War?
2. How did the passing of the 13th Amendment change the lives of African Americans in the South?
3. What are some examples of inequality after the passing of the 14th Amendment?
4. What are some successes and failures of the 15th Amendment?
**Did The Lives Of Former Slaves Improve After The Civil War?**

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<td><strong>Formative Performance Task</strong></td>
<td>Students will create a list of improvements, then divide these lists into specific categories.</td>
<td>Students will create a T-chart comparing and contrasting the conditions of slavery before and after the Civil War.</td>
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**Summative Performance Task**

**ARGUMENT EXTENSION**

**TAKING INFORMED ACTION**

Create a Public Service Announcement discussing one needed improvement that would address a problem in the community.
| Compelling Question | Did The Lives Of Former Slaves Improve After The Civil War? |

Staging the compelling question
<table>
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<th>What were the conditions of slavery before the Civil War?</th>
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<td>Formative Performance Task</td>
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| | Source B: Twelve Years a Slave Excerpt  
| | Source C: “A Lecture on the Nature of Slavery” By Frederick Douglass |

Students will visit stations around the room. At each station will be a primary source document and/or image and a large post-it note. As a small group students will visit each station, spending a designated amount of time at each, and are required to leave one condition of a slave’s life as well as a reaction to the prior group’s answer (the first group will only leave an answer).

**Formative Performance Task**

Students will be writing their paragraphs referring back to their sources (slavery images, "Twelve Years a Slave" excerpt, and "A Lecture on the Nature of Slavery").
Supporting Question 1

Featured Source A

Slavery Images

http://cdn.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3a30000/3a32000_
United States War Department, "Overseer Artayou Carrier Whipped Me....," April 2, 1863. Still Picture Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, NWDNS-165-JT-230.
Excerpt

Description of a Slave Auction

By: Solomon Northup

Little Randall was made to jump and run across the floor, demonstrating his activity and condition. All the time the trade was going on Eliza was crying loud, and wringing her hands. She begged the man not to buy him unless he also bought herself and her daughter Emily. She promised, in that case, to be the most faithful slave that ever lived. The man answered that he could not afford it, an Eliza, burst into grief...she wanted to be with her children, she said.....over and over again she told them how she loved her boy. But it was of no avail; the man could not afford her. The bargain was agreed upon, and Randall must go alone. Then Eliza ran to him, embraced him passionately, kissed him again and again and told him to remember her – all the while her tears falling in the boy’s face like rain. “Don’t cry mama. I will be a good boy. Don’t cry,” said Randall, looking back as they passed out of the door. What became of the lad, God knows.

Source:
Twelve Years a Slave Excerpt, By: Solomon Northup
A master is a person who claims and exercises a right of property in the person of his fellow man. He does this with the force of law and the blessing of Southern religion. The law gives the master absolute power over the slave. He may work him, hire him out, sell him, and in certain circumstances, kill him. The slave is a person without any rights....his name is disrespectfully inserted in the master’s account book, with horses, sheep, and pigs. In law, the slave has no wife, no children, and no home. He can own nothing, possess nothing, acquire nothing, but what must belong to another. To eat the fruit of his own labor is considered stealing. To ensure good behavior, the slaveholder relies on the whip; to make the slave humble, he relies on the whip; to take the place of wages as motivation to work, he relies on the whip; to destroy his manhood he relies on the whip, the chain, the gag, the thumbscrew, the pillory, the knife, the pistol, and the bloodhound. These are the necessary parts of the system....

Source:
Douglass, Frederick, "Lecture on Slavery No. 1" December 1, 1850.
### Supporting Question 2

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<th>How did the passing of the 13th Amendment change the lives of African Americans in the South?</th>
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• Source B: Tenant Farming and Sharecropping in North Carolina  
• Source C: Sharecropping |

**Formative Performance Task**

Students can create an organizer comparing and contrasting how lives in the South changed after the 13th Amendment.
Freed by the Emancipation Proclamation in 1865, former slave Henry Adams testified before the U.S. Senate fifteen years later about the early days of his freedom, describing white planters’ unfair labor practices and the violent, intimidating atmosphere in which ex-slaves felt compelled to work for their former masters.

The white men read a paper to all of us colored people telling us that we were free and could go where we pleased and work for who we pleased. The man I belonged to told me it was best to stay with him. He said, “The bad white men was mad with the Negroes because they were free and they would kill you all for fun.” He said, stay where we are living and we could get protection from our old masters.

I told him I thought that every man, when he was free, could have his rights and protect themselves. He said, “The colored people could never protect themselves among the white people. So you had all better stay with the white people who raised you and make contracts with them to work by the year for one-fifth of all you make. And next year you can get one-third, and the next you maybe work for one-half you make. We have contracts for you all to sign, to work for one-twentieth you make from now until the crop is ended, and then next year you all can make another crop and get more of it.”

I told him I would not sign anything. I said, “I might sign to be killed. I believe the white people is trying to fool us.” But he said again, “Sign this contract so I can take it to the Yankees and have it recorded.” All our colored people signed it but myself and a boy named Samuel Jefferson. All who lived on the place was about sixty, young and old.

On the day after all had signed the contracts, we went to cutting oats. I asked the boss, “Could we get any of the oats?” He said, “No; the oats were made before you were free.” After that he told us to get timber to build a sugar-mill to make molasses. We did so. On the 13th day of July 1865 we started to pull fodder. I asked the boss would he make a bargain to give us half of all the fodder we would pull. He said we may pull two or three stacks and then we could have all the other. I told him we wanted half, so if we only pulled two or three stacks we would get half of that. He said, “All right.” We got that and part of the corn we made. We made five bales of cotton but we did not get a pound of that. We made two or three hundred gallons of molasses and only got what we could eat. We made about eight-hundred bushel of potatoes; we got a few to eat. We split rails three or four weeks and got not a cent for that.

In September I asked the boss to let me go to Shreveport. He said, “All right, when will you come back?” I told him “next week.” He said, “You had better carry a pass.” I said, “I will see whether I am free by going without a pass.”

I met four white men about six miles south of Keachie, De Soto Parish. One of them asked me who I belonged to. I told him no one. So him and two others struck me with a stick and told me they were going to kill me and every other Negro who told them that they did not belong to anyone. One of them who knew me told the others, “Let Henry alone for he is a hard-working n****r and a good n****r.” They left me and I then went on to Shreveport. I seen over twelve colored men and women, beat, shot and hung between there and Shreveport.

Sunday I went back home. The boss was not at home. I asked the madame, “where was the boss?” She says, “Now, the boss; now, the boss” You should say ‘master’ and ‘mistress’ -- and shall or leave. We will not have no n****r here on our place who cannot say ‘mistress’ and ‘master.’ You all are not free yet and will not be until Congress sits, and you shall call every white lady ‘missus’ and every white man ‘master.’”

During the same week the madame takin’ a stick and beat one of the young colored girls, who was about fifteen years of age and who is my sister, and split her back. The boss came next day and take this same girl (my sister) and whipped her nearly to death, but in the contracts he was to hit no one anymore. After the whipping a large number of young colored people taken a notion to leave. On the 18th of September I and eleven men and boys left that place and started for Shreveport. I had my horse along, My brother was riding him, and all of our things was packed on him. Out come about forty armed men (white) and shot at us and takin’ my horse.
Then I got a wagon and went to peddling, and had to get a pass, according to the laws of the parishes, to do so. In October I was searched for pistols and robbed of $250 by a large crowd of white men and the law would do nothing about it. The same crowd of white men broke up five churches (colored). When any of us would leave the white people, they would take everything we had, all the money that we made on their places. They killed many hundreds of my race when they were running away to get freedom.

After they told us we were free -- even then they would not let us live as man and wife together. And when we would run away to be free, the white people would not let us come on their places to see our mothers, wives, sisters, or fathers. We was made to leave or go back and live as slaves. To my own knowledge there was over two thousand colored people killed trying to get away after the white people told us we were free in 1865. This was between Shreveport and Logansport.


Source: [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/sharec/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/sharec/)
Tenant Farming and Sharecropping in North Carolina

Tenant farmers usually paid the landowner rent for farmland and a house. They owned the crops they planted and made their own decisions about them. After harvesting the crop, the tenant sold it and received income from it. From that income, he paid the landowner the amount of rent owed.

Sharecroppers seldom owned anything. Instead, they borrowed practically everything — not only the land and a house but also supplies, draft animals, tools, equipment, and seeds. The sharecropper contributed his, and his family’s, labor. Sharecroppers had no control over which crops were planted or how they were sold. After harvesting the crop, the landowner sold it and applied its income toward settling the sharecropper’s account. Most tenant farmers and sharecroppers bought everything they needed on credit from local merchants, hoping to make enough money at harvest time to pay their debts.

By 1880, more than 1/3 of NC farms operated under systems of sharecropping or tenant farming. While this system may have assisted some poor people in earning a bare living, landowners were easily able to take advantage of vulnerable workers and unfortunately, tens of thousands of farmers fell down the tenancy ladder rather than moving up it. Some farmers lost everything because of crop failures, low cotton prices, ill health, exhaustion of the soil, excessive interest rates, or inability to compete with tenant labor.

Many sharecroppers were freed slaves, working the same land that they had once been enslaved upon. Sharecroppers were also often uneducated and could not read or write, thus landowners could easily take advantage of the situation. Landowners were in charge of selling the crops and keeping records of any debt the sharecropper owed them. While sharecroppers always held hope that the yield of crops would be large, and that their debt (often for items like seeds and tools) had been paid to the landowner, sharecroppers often ended up empty handed. The landowner need only tweak the numbers a bit, and a sharecropper would remain indebted to the landowner year after year. If the sharecropper tried to leave, he could be jailed for running out on such debt, legitimate or not. The legal system was likely to take the word of a rich, white landowner over a poor person and/or freed slave. The sharecropper system could thus be very profitable for a landowner, but a never-ending, unfair cycle for a sharecropper and his family. Landowners could also order sharecroppers to leave their land at any point for any reason. Such would often occur if a sharecropper became ill or injured.

The Industrial Revolution and the First World War brought temporary prosperity to both agriculture and forestry in North Carolina. Agriculture expanded to meet the increased demand for food and fertilizers were becoming available. However, sharecroppers saw little of this brief time period of prosperity, since the twenties and thirties brought the Great Depression. The boom years of the WWI were over and farm prices again dropped severely. Cotton sold for 35 cents per pound in 1919 but dropped to only 6 cents per pound in 1931. Total national farm income was 16.9 billion in 1919, and only 5.3 billion in 1932.

The rural pattern at this time in North Carolina was small farms, poverty, and a terribly poor standard of living. In 1923 a survey was made of 351 rural families in Chatham County, North Carolina, both white and black. Almost half were tenants and sharecroppers. None of the 175 had running water, and only eight even had outside bathrooms. The others had no sanitary facilities whatsoever. The average daily income for a member of a sharecropping family was 9 cents.

Source:
http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/04/Sharecro...
Supporting Question 2

Featured Source C: Sharecropping

- [https://media1.britannica.com/eb-media/59/78359-00](https://media1.britannica.com/eb-media/59/78359-00)

![Sharecropping image](https://media1.britannica.com/eb-media/59/78359-00)

![Sharecropping image](http://ebonyhistories.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/)

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Supporting Question 3

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• Source B: Black Codes  
• Source C: Strange Fruit  
• Source D: Worse Than Slavery |

Formative Performance Task
Frederick Douglass tirelessly labored to end slavery but true equality remained out of reach. Despite the successful passage of several Constitutional amendments and federal laws after the Civil War, unwritten rules and Jim Crow laws continued to curtail the rights and freedoms of African Americans. Douglass concisely summarized the reality of Jim Crow in an 1887 letter that claimed the South’s “wrongs are not much now written in laws which all may see – but the hidden practices of people who have not yet, abandoned the idea of Mastery and dominion over their fellow man.” Racism, violence, and vigilantism were the tools of this “Mastery,” which permitted whites to produce a social order characterized by inequality.

Having lived in Washington, DC, since 1872, Douglass had ample opportunity to witness discrimination in nearby Maryland and Virginia and was keenly aware of the struggle for quality schooling and judicial access during the post-Reconstruction years. Douglass’s writing reflected the belief shared amongst the black community that the best places to combat the “hidden practices” of Jim Crow were the schoolhouse and the court room. “[F]rom all I can learn colored lawyers are admitted to practice in Southern Courts and I am very glad to admit the fact – for it implies a wonderful revolution in the public sentiment of the Southern States. I have not yet learned what are the inequalities between the races as to school privileges at the south – In some of the states the time allotted to colored schools is less than that allowed to whites. And I have heard and believe that in none of the states are the teachers of colored Schools as well paid as the teachers of White Schools.” By the 1880s, the separation of the races became increasingly apparent with school segregation mandated by law in nearly every Southern state. Despite this adversity, Douglass made it clear that inequalities could be corrected by challenging them.

Unfortunately the situation became worse before it improved. Formal legal segregation in the South became a reality with the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling in 1896, which stated that segregation did not constitute discrimination, thus establishing the “separate but equal” doctrine. It would take nearly seventy years before the civil rights revolution that Douglass envisioned to take hold and provide for federally mandated equal conditions for all citizens.

A full transcript is available.

**TRANSCRIPT**

My dear sir: Pardon delay - answer to your letter made careful enquiry necessary. From all I can learn colored Lawyers are admitted to practice in Southern Courts, and I am very glad to admit the fact - for it implies a wonderful revolution in the public sentiment of the Southern States. I have not yet learned what are the inequalities between the races as to school privileges at the South. In some of the states the time allotted to colored schools is less than that allowed to whites. And I have heard and believe that in none of the states are the teachers of colored Schools as well paid as the teachers of White Schools.” By the 1880s, the separation of the races became increasingly apparent with school segregation mandated by law in nearly every Southern state. Despite this adversity, Douglass made it clear that inequalities could be corrected by challenging them.

In Kentucky I believe so far as the law is concerned equal advantages are extended to colored children for Education, and the Same may be true of other states. I think the Bureau of Education will give you all the information you may require on this branch of the subject of your enquiries. Our wrongs are not so much now in written laws which all may see - but the hidden practices of a people who have not yet abandoned the idea of Mastery and dominion over their fellow man.

With great Respect

Frederick Douglass

**Source:**

[https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/jim-c/](https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/jim-c/)
Supporting Question 3

Featured Source B

Black Codes

Excerpt

**Black Code (Original)**

ORDINANCE relative to the police of recently emancipated negroes or freedmen within the corporate limits of the town of Opelousas.

Whereas the relations formerly subsisting between master and slave have become changed by the action of the controlling authorities; and whereas it is necessary to provide for the proper police and government of the recently emancipated negroes or freedmen in their new relations to the municipal authorities:

**SECTION 1.** Be it therefore ordained by the board of police of the town of Opelousas That no negro or freedman shall be allowed to come within the limits of the town of Opelousas without special permission from his employers, specifying the object of his visit and the time necessary for the accomplishment of the same. Whoever shall violate this provision shall suffer imprisonment and two days’ work on the public streets, or shall pay a fine of two dollars and fifty cents.

**SECTION 2.** Be it further ordained That every negro freedman who shall be found on the streets of Opelousas after 10 o’clock at night without a written pass or permit from his employer shall be imprisoned and compelled to work five days on the public streets, or pay a fine of five dollars.

**SECTION 3.** No negro or freedman shall be permitted to rent or keep a house within the limits of the town under any circumstances, and any one thus offending shall be ejected and compelled to find an employer or leave the town within twenty-four hours. The lessor or furnisher of the house leased or kept as above shall pay a fine of ten dollars for each offence.

**SECTION 4.** No negro or freedman shall reside within the limits of the town of Opelousas who is not in the regular service of some white person or former owner, who shall be held responsible for the conduct of said freedman; but said employer or former owner may permit said freedman to hire his time by special permission in writing, which permission shall not extend over twenty-four hours at any one time. Any one violating the provisions of this section shall be imprisoned and forced to work for two days on the public streets.

**SECTION 5.** No public meetings or congregations of negroes or freedmen shall be allowed within the limits of the town of Opelousas under any circumstances or for any purpose without the permission of the mayor or president of the board. This prohibition is not intended, however, to prevent the freedmen from attending the usual church services conducted by established ministers of religion. Every freedman violating this law shall be imprisoned and made to work five days on the public streets.

**SECTION 6.** No negro or freedman shall be permitted to preach, exhort, or otherwise declaim to congregations of colored people without a special permission from the mayor or president of the board of police under the penalty of a fine of ten dollars or twenty days’ work on the public streets.

**SECTION 7.** No freedman who is not in the military service shall be allowed to carry firearms, or any kind of weapons, within the limits of the town of Opelousas without the special permission of his employer, in writing, and approved by the mayor or president of the board of police. Any one thus offending shall forfeit his weapons and shall be imprisoned and made to work for five days on the public streets or pay a fine of five dollars in lieu of said work.

**SECTION 8.** No freedman shall sell, barter, or exchange any article of merchandise or traffic within the limits of Opelousas without permission in writing from his employer or the mayor or president of the board, under the penalty of the forfeiture of said articles and imprisonment and one day’s labor, or a fine of one dollar in lieu of said work.

**SECTION 9.** Any freedman found drunk within the limits of the town shall be imprisoned and made to labor five days on the public streets, or pay five dollars in lieu of said labor.

**SECTION 10.** Any freedman not residing in Opelousas who shall be found within the corporate limits after the hour of 3 p.m. on Sunday without a special permission from his employer or the mayor shall be arrested and imprisoned and made to work two days on the public streets, or pay two dollars in lieu of said work.

**SECTION 11.** All the foregoing provisions apply to freedmen and freedwomen, or both sexes.

**SECTION 12.** It shall be the special duty of the mayor or president of the board to see that all the provisions of this ordinance are faithfully executed.

**SECTION 13.** Be it further ordained That this ordinance to take effect from and after its first
Ordained the 3d day of July, 1865.

**Source:** Black Code from Opelousas, Louisiana, July 3, 1865.

1. Why do you think the southern states established **black codes** (also known as *Jim Crow laws*)?
2. What type of document is this (e.g., letter, flyer, advertisement)? Is it a primary source and how do you know?
3. Whom is the document intended for?
4. In your own words, list 5 things that a free, African-American could do under the black codes of Louisiana:

**Source:**

Black Code from Opelousas, Louisiana, July 3, 1865.
Excerpt

Strange Fruit

Southern trees bear strange fruit
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees
Here is fruit for the crows to pluck
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck
For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop
Here is a strange and bitter crop

Source:
Written by Lewis Allan, Maurice Pearl, Dwayne P Wiggins • Copyright © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc
Supporting Question 3

Featured Source D
Worse Than Slavery

Worse Than Slavery, 1902 - Records of Rights
Supporting Question 4

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- Source B: Hiram R. Revels On Readmission of Georgia to the Union March 16, 1870  
- Source C: 15th Amendment |

**Formative Performance Task**

After reading several sources, students will participate in a socratic seminar, discussing the successes and failures of the 15th Amendment.
Excerpt

During Reconstruction (1865-1877), Republicans passed four federal civil rights bills to protect the rights of African-Americans, the fourth being passed in 1875. It was nearly a century before the next civil rights bill was passed, because in 1876 Democrats regained partial control of Congress and successfully blocked further progress. As Democrats regained control of the legislatures in southern States, they began to repeal State civil rights protections and to abrogate existing federal civil rights laws. As African-American US Rep. John Roy Lynch (MS) noted, ”The opposition to civil rights in the South is confined almost exclusively to States under democratic control . . .”

Devious and cunning methods were required to circumvent the explicit voting protections of the 14th and 15th Amendments, and southern Democrats implemented nearly a dozen separate devices to prevent blacks from voting, including:

- Poll taxes
- Literacy tests
- Black codes and enforced segregation
- White-only primaries
- Physical intimidation and violence

1. The poll tax

The poll tax was a fee paid by a voter before he could vote. The fee was high enough that most poor were unable to pay the tax and therefore unable to vote. Although the poll tax affected both whites and blacks, it was disproportionately hard on blacks who were just emerging from slavery, many of whom had not yet established an independent means of living. A poll tax was first proposed in Texas in 1874, right after Democrats reclaimed power from the Republicans, but it was North Carolina in 1876 that became the first State to enact a poll tax, and other southern States quickly followed.

2. Literacy tests

Literacy tests required a voter to demonstrate a certain level of learning proficiency before he could vote. In some cases, the test was 20 pages long for blacks, and those administering the tests were white Democrats who nearly always ruled that blacks were illiterate. In Alabama, the test included questions such as, ”Where do presidential electors cast ballots for president?” ”Name the rights a person has after he has been indicted by a grand jury.” Democrats required blacks to have an above average education before they could vote but then simultaneously opposed black education and even worked with the Ku Klux Klan to burn down schools attended by blacks. Clearly, they did not intend for blacks to vote.

5. Black codes and enforced segregation

Black Codes (later called Jim Crow laws) restricted the freedoms and economic opportunities of blacks. For example, in the four years from 1865-1869, southern Democrats passed “Black Codes” to prohibit blacks from voting, holding office, owning property, entering towns without permission, serving on juries, or racially intermarrying.

National observers at that time concluded that the South was simply trying to institute a new form of slavery through these Black Codes. This tactic was obvious to African-Americans, thus causing black US Rep. Joseph H. Rainey (Republican from SC) to quip: ”I can only say that we love freedom more – vastly more – than slavery; consequently we hope to keep clear of the Democrats!”

Southern Democrats went well beyond Black Codes, however, and also imposed forced racial segregation. In 1875, Tennessee became the first State to do so, and by 1890 several other southern States had followed. As a result, schools, hospitals, public transportation, restaurants, etc., became segregated. (Even though the Republican Congress had already passed laws banning segregation, the US Supreme Court struck down those anti-segregation laws in a series of decisions in the 1870s and 1880s.)

7. White-only primaries

Another way Democrats could keep blacks from being elected was by enacting Democratic Party policies prohibiting blacks from voting in their primaries. When Texas later codified this policy into State law, the US Supreme Court struck down that Texas law in 1927, but not the party policies. The Democratic Parties in Georgia, Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina, etc., therefore continued their reliance on white-only primaries. Because Democrats Solidly controlled every level of government in the South (often called the ”solid Democratic South”), this policy had the same effect as a State law and again ensured that no black would be elected. In 1935, the Supreme Court upheld this Democratic policy but then reversed itself and finally struck it down in 1944.
8. Physical intimidation and violence

In 1871, black US Rep. Robert Brown Elliott (Republican from SC) observed that: “the declared purpose [of the Democratic party is] to defeat the ballot with the bullet and other coercive means…. The white Republican of the South is also hunted down and murdered or scourged for his opinion’s sake, and during the past two years more than six hundred loyal [Republican] men of both races have perished in my State alone.” Elliott’s term “coercive means” accurately described the lynchings as well as the cross burnings, church burnings, incarceration on trumped-up charges, beatings, rape, murder, etc.

The Ku Klux Klan was a leader in this form of violent intimidation by Democrats. As African-American US Rep. James T. Rapier (Republican from al) explained in 1874, Democrats “were hunting me down as the partridge on the mount, night and day, with their Ku Klux Klan, simply because I was a Republican and refused to bow at the foot of their Baal.”

Of all forms of violent intimidation, lynchings were by far the most effective. Between 1882 and 1964, 4,743 persons were lynched – 3,446 blacks and 1,297 whites. Why were so many more blacks lynched than whites? According to African-American Rep. John R. Lynch (Republican from SC), “More colored than white men are thus persecuted simply because they constitute in larger numbers the opposition to the Democratic Party.”

Republicans often led the effort to pass federal anti-lynching laws, but Democrats successfully blocked every anti-lynching bill. For example, in 1921, Republican Rep. Leonidas Dyer (MO) introduced a federal anti-lynching bill in Congress, but Democrats in the Senate killed it. The NAACP reported on December 17, 1921, that: "since the introduction of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill in Congress on April 11, 1921, there have been 28 persons murdered by lynchings in the United States. "Although some Democrats introduced anti-lynching bills across the decades, their Democratic leaders killed every effort and Congress never did pass an anti-lynching bill.

Source:
www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/1072053/posts
Hiram R. Revels, Republican of Mississippi, was sworn in as the first African American member of the U.S. Senate and the first ever to serve in the U.S. Congress. In December of that year, he was followed by the first black representative, Joseph H. Rainey of South Carolina.

With the end of the Civil War and the coming of Reconstruction, the Republican party became dominant in the former Confederate states, which were readmitted to representation in the Union only after they had ratified the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution—abolishing slavery and making the former slaves citizens. With ratification in 1870 of the Fifteenth Amendment, protecting the right of all citizens to vote regardless of race, the stage was set for election of the first African American members to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

Less than a month after he entered the Senate, Revels delivered his maiden speech on the Senate floor, with a crowd of onlookers filling the galleries. At issue was a bill readmitting Georgia to representation in the Union with a House amendment that could be used to prevent blacks from holding state office. Recognizing that he was new to the body, Revels nonetheless considered the matter to be of such importance to African American citizens that he felt impelled to speak out. He stressed the responsible behavior of most slaves during the war, when they might have engaged in a bloody revolt, and declared that black citizens “ask but the rights which are theirs by God’s universal law.” He denounced the House amendment to the readmission bill that would retain in office, regardless of any decision by the legislature, judges who had ruled that blacks had no right to hold office in the state. In conclusion, he declared, “I protest in the name of truth and human rights against any and every attempt to fetter the hands of one hundred thousand white and colored citizens of the state of Georgia.”

The Senate, however, did not heed Revels’ plea and retained the objectionable amendment when it passed the bill. Through the remainder of his brief term, Revels often spoke out on issues of civil rights and education for black Americans. When he completed his service in March 1871, Hiram Revels returned to Mississippi, where he later became president of Alcorn University.

Source:
http://www.authentichistory.com/1865-1897/1-recons_
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compelling Question</th>
<th>Did The Lives Of Former Slaves Improve After The Civil War?</th>
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Argument

Extension
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<th>Understand</th>
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<td>Assess</td>
<td>Create a Public Service Announcement discussing one needed improvement that would address a problem in the community.</td>
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Students can record themselves discussing the need for an improvement in their community.